



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Tuesday, 7 March 2006

RECREATION AREAS MANAGEMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (3.45 pm): The introduction of new laws which seek to take powers away from the Queensland Recreation Areas Management Authority and the board and give increased powers to EPA officers is nothing more than a stampede over fundamental principles of justice. This draconian legislation is similar to the legislation that saw Natural Resources officers given the power to become tree police and this was then extended to them policing irrigators.

The proposed new laws allowing departmental officers to secretly obtain the criminal history of landowners that they intend to visit as well as giving them extensive powers to seize evidence including documents, secretly recorded conversations with landholders, using spy-in-the-sky satellites and a dob-in-a-farmer hotline, are an absolute disgrace and are against the rights and liberties of people and breach their privacy. Principles that have been part of our legal system for hundreds of years are simply being tossed aside by this government. The landowners and water users are being denied the legal right—

Mr WALLACE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I ask you to rule on relevance. This bill is related to recreation areas, not landholders.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Come back to the bill, member for Charters Towers.

Mr KNUTH: The hatred and hostility towards the government that has escalated in rural and regional Queensland is evident. Now the state government is targeting recreational activities. There are five areas that are targeted in this piece of legislation—Fraser Island, Green Island, Inskip Point, Moreton Island and Bribie Island. It is just the beginning. It will extend to the rest of Queensland as a result of government—Big Brother—having control over every individual in Queensland.

Members will be aware of the flying fox issue. EPA officers from Townsville have approached residents advising them of possible prosecution if they continue to disturb the flying foxes. These flying foxes have been flapping around for five years disturbing the peace.

Mr WALLACE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. This bill is not about flying foxes; it is about recreation areas.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Charters Towers, please come back to the bill.

Mr KNUTH: This is about the powers that will be given to EPA officers. The flying foxes have been flapping around for five years disturbing the peace. They have been excreting over swimming pools and homes. Nursing mums cannot take their children out and let them play in their backyards and they cannot hang their clothes out. They cannot turn their air conditioners on.

Mr WALLACE: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I would ask you to rule on whether this bill is about flying foxes or recreation areas.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Charters Towers, I have been very lenient. The last time you raised the issue of flying foxes you and I had a difference of opinion. Please come back to the bill, otherwise I may have to take some action and I do not want to do that.

Mr KNUTH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I believe that this bill will extend powers to EPA officers. If they are given more powers they will be knocking on doors in Charters Towers apprehending law-abiding citizens whose only crime was to protect their families and their properties against these filthy, virus-ridden pests. I want to bring that issue to the attention of the House.